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July 23, 2001

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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

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Publisher's Notes

The Bush energy plan is based upon a wrongheaded assertion about the American lifestyle: that we will inevitably consume ever-increasing amounts of energy. Consequently, Bush emphasizes increasing the supply of energy and scarcely mentions conservation.

"The president believes that it's an American way of life [for Americans to be energy gluttons]," says presidential spokesman Ari Fleischer, "and that it should be the goal of policy-makers to protect the American way of life."

Vice President Dick Cheney puts it this way: "Conservation may be a sign of personal virtue, but it is not a sufficient basis for a sound, comprehensive energy policy."

Or as conservative Andrew Bernstein writes starkly in the *San Francisco Chronicle*: "Conservation is essentially the moral code of self-sacrifice applied to current energy problems. ... It is immoral because conservation repudiates the American Dream. ... The United States became great because it embodied a moral code of rational self-interest, the principle that men should be free to create abundance in pursuit of their own happiness."

Inherent in this conservative logic, which has been wholeheartedly embraced by the Bush administration, are three contentious points: that the supply of fossil fuels is infinite; that our lifestyle requires us to consume ever-increasing amounts of resources; and that such behavior is consistent with a moral code of rational self-interest.

Debating whether the world's fossil fuel resources are infinite is akin to discussing whether the world is flat. A massive body of evidence indicates that the earth is running out of resources. Beginning with the 1972 landmark study "The Limits to Growth," scientists and enlightened public servants have pointed out that within a generation or two, we will have depleted the world's supply of fossil fuels.

Bush administration officials maintain that we have ample fossil fuel reserves. It's not that those supplies are infinite, just that they are sufficient to feed our avaricious energy appetite during this administration. The long-term consequences will have to be dealt with by some other president. This is the standard con-

servative refrain: Live for today and damn the consequences.

Whether it is inherent in the American lifestyle to consume ever-increasing amounts of energy is, however, debatable. Surveys are mixed: Americans say they value protecting the environment over producing energy (58 percent to 32 percent). Unfortunately their purchasing behavior does not reflect this sentiment; witness the popularity of gas-guzzling SUVs and energy-consuming mega-refrigerators. On the other hand, it is encouraging to note that in the face of the rolling blackout crisis, California consumers voluntarily have reduced their energy use by 11 percent.

Is the American lifestyle dictated by a moral code of rational self-interest? That depends on which American lifestyle you are talking about. When Bush, Cheney and conservative ideologues talk about the American appetite for energy and its moral efficacy as an indicator of rational self-interest, they are speaking in defense of a business-oriented lifestyle dominated by marketplace values. From that perspective, self-interest dictates that consumers use energy without regard for social or environmental consequences.

But most progressives don't subscribe to the business lifestyle or its values. The challenge of the energy crisis is for progressives to come up with a response that translates

Debating whether fossil fuel resources are infinite is like discussing if the world is flat.

into policy, promotes conservation while equally distributing the discomfort among all segments of society, and proposes a healthy alternative lifestyle.

This is why, for a start, progressives should emphasize the use of renewable energy sources (solar, wind, biomass and the like). These common-sense alternatives work well in a lifestyle that emphasizes conservation. They are inherently based on local resources, and therefore lend themselves to local control by distributed energy producers.

As always, I welcome your feedback (bburnett@inthesetimes.com).

Bob Burnett

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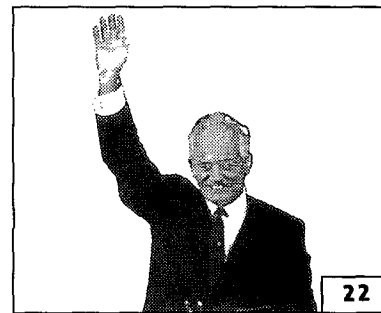
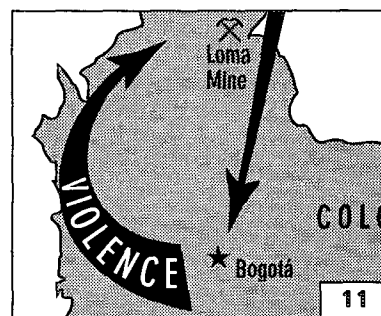
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Cover illustration from U.S. Space Command's "Vision for 2020"



Moore to the Point

Michael Moore's commentary is funny and easy to read, but it misses the mark in several ways ("Give the Devil a Bone," June 11). First, the issue is not the centrism of the Democrats, but the best strategy for challenging this centrism. Moore does not seem to understand that the nature of the electoral system dictates that the challenge should take place in Democratic Party primaries. This point is borne out by what happened to left third parties in 1948, 1968 and 1980. It should have been Nader vs. Gore in the primaries, which would have had a huge positive impact. Nader vs. Gore and Bush in the regular election was too late, and not helpful for building a progressive challenge in the future.

Second, contrary to what Moore says, no liberal or progressive who voted for Clinton in 1992 thought he was liberal. The expectations for Clinton in office were very minimal, but he was a relief after 12 long years of Reagan-Bush.

Third, there is no need to "blame" Nader, Moore and all the others who supported Nader for the election of Bush. But they should be blamed for their failure to take social science and history seriously in thinking about a progressive electoral strategy, and for continuing to advocate an utterly futile, short-sighted and self-defeating strategy that is a proven loser.

Nader, Moore and the others should be helping to develop programs and candidates that people can vote for in Democratic Party primaries in 2002 and 2004. That's the best electoral arena to reach potential progressives, and the only way to transform the Democratic Party.

G. William Domhoff
Santa Cruz, California

It is grimly funny to watch Michael Moore turn himself into a Republican spin doctor and try to weasel his way out of responsibility for the horrific damage he and his fellow Nader stooges have inflicted on the country.

Moore's point that some of Bush's lamentable actions are reversals of steps that Clinton didn't have the guts to take until his final days as a lame duck has an element of truth. Fine, no one thinks that Clinton was a strong environmentalist. But Republican apologists are using this half-truth as cover, and Moore falls right into line. The arsenic standard may have been a last-minute booby trap for the Republicans. But many of the monument designations and other land management policies had

been in preparation for a long time—the prohibition on logging in roadless areas, notably, was the product of a lengthy process that involved 1.6 million public comments. The rush to implement such policies at the close of the Clinton administration was simply due to the fact that, thanks to Ralph Nader, they couldn't be implemented, as they would have been, in a Gore administration.

Serious, working activists almost universally deplore Nader and his connivance in electing Bush because their main consideration is creating the best circumstances for organizing. Fear can spur people to rally against an immediate threat, or to write checks to an organization or two. But the kind of patient, steady grassroots work that can actually transform politics and culture requires hope. People need to sense that they can make a difference, that improvements, however small, are being made, that democracy, however flawed, can work. As any organizer knows, you need to win at least occasionally.

The concern isn't whether people in Washington or in state capitals are leading us, but whether they are effectively thwarting us. Those who are serious about grassroots work know that Democrats in power—sometimes helping, occasionally opposing, usually dithering in the middle—create a far better climate for organizing than Republicans. Endlessly struggling to hold back the tide of destruction flowing from the right, rather than being able to take satisfying, creative steps, breeds burnout and cynicism.

A vote for Gore wouldn't have been a meaningful step toward social change or environmental protection, but a vote for Nader, predictably helping to ensconce Bush and the Republicans in power, seriously hampered those who are trying to bring about social change and environmental protection. That is the legacy of Nader and his minions.

Philip Johnson
Portland, Oregon

My thanks to Michael Moore for pointing out that the best prescription for political illiteracy is a few years of Republican control, so that I may better "see the evil out in the open rather than covered up in a liberal sheep's clothing that seems to fool a lot of people." Perhaps we can all vote for a fascist ticket in 2002 and 2004, so as to further minimize the risk of being duped by two-faced liberals.

Edward Tverdek
Chicago

Fact or Fiction?

Geoffrey F. X. O'Connell states that the military in World War II was not "Colin Powell's Army," implying that the segregated army was well capable of massacring 1,000 black soldiers in 1943 ("Missing in Action," June 11). But it was Colin Powell's Army that investigated these charges and found there to be no evidence of such a massacre. The idea of a monolithic group of modern-day Army investigators covering up such an incident more than strains credulity. The fact that no one has come up with any list of so-called surviving family members of those massacred alone renders the massacre scenario to be without validity.

O'Connell's article of strained possibilities falls quickly in line with theories of whites purposefully poisoning the black community with AIDS, the CIA attempting to destabilize Watts with crack cocaine, the rape of Tawana Brawley, etc. This brand of leftist paranoia and black victimology renders progressives open to charges of silliness at best and delusional propaganda at worst. There is enough history of real racism and misbehavior on the part of the powers that be, without resorting to charges that make us look foolish and distract us from the real work of social justice.

Jan Houbolt
Baltimore

Thank you for Geoffrey F.X. O'Connell's informative article. I understand that you must express the incredulity of most of the readers you are trying to reach, but I do not find the story incredible at all. I lived through that era, and, being aware of the capacity for racial violence in our country at that time, I am also painfully aware of the strong motivation of established institutions to cover up even minor insurrections that led to violent reprisals. The inability to confirm what happened to so many men in uniform from that era strikes me as highly improbable without the assumption that there was a cover-up of massive proportions. I urge you to get the whole story out.

Jerry G. Bails
St. Clair Shores, Michigan

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Bulgarians display masks of Simeon (right) and other party leaders.

JEANNETTE GOEHRING

opposition Bulgarian Socialist Party. NMSII officials said they will seek to form a coalition government—most likely, analysts say, with the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, which represents Bulgaria's Turkish minority.

Simeon hasn't said whether he plans to take an official post, and speculation is rampant over whether he covets the prime minister's job or plans to wait and run in the presidential election in

the fall. Some theorize he wants to establish a constitutional monarchy.

Bulgaria is in no shape to gamble on its future, and with continued unrest and economic uncertainty in neighboring countries, economists say even maintaining the current rate of growth will be a challenge. Czar, wizard or jet-set business booster, Simeon has a lot of work to do on Bulgaria's bumpy road to revival. ■

lucky to earn \$100 a month, while a few Bulgarians have grown very rich. "The current situation is not bearable," says Daniela Kolarova, director of Partners for Change, a Sofia-based organization that promotes civil society. "People are tired of waiting for improvement."

Bulgarians are also sick of what media expert Ognian Zlatev describes as "blunt, obvious corruption" in their officials. Some politicians previously worked as agents for the communist-era secret police. Kickbacks are endemic. The UDF's former Deputy Prime Minister, Alexander Boshkov, earned the nickname "Mr. 10 Percent" from his involvement in murky privatization deals.

Along came Simeon, an outsider with clean hands, a shining image, and connections with European royals and financiers. Cynics argue that his timing is perfect to harvest the fruits of the UDF's tough reforms.

The NMSII has pledged to quickly raise living standards, overhaul the tax and legal systems, root out corruption, trim the state bureaucracy and increase salaries and pensions. The movement also plans to introduce microcredit schemes, including zero-interest loans for entrepreneurs and small businesses. Simeon says he will work to attract more foreign investors and continue Bulgaria's drive to join the European Union and NATO.

Bulgarians seem to believe him: The NMSII garnered nearly 43 percent of the vote, a clear win over the UDF and the

Suspicious Minds

In a victory for free speech, the U.S. government on June 14 withdrew a court order directing the Seattle Independent Media Center to hand over user connection logs, which track Internet addresses of computers requesting access to a Web site. Federal agents who delivered the order on April 21 said they needed the logs for an investigation related to sensitive documents stolen from Canadian police (see "Unclear and Present Danger," June 11). IMC Web site postings allegedly contained details about the travel plans of George W. Bush, who was attending the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City.

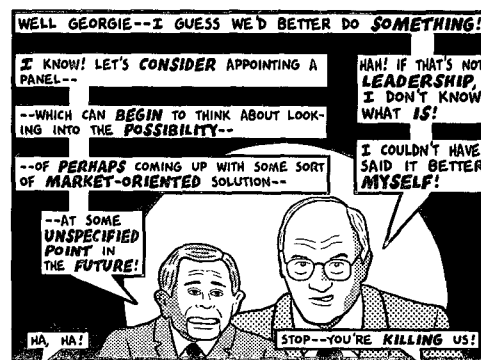
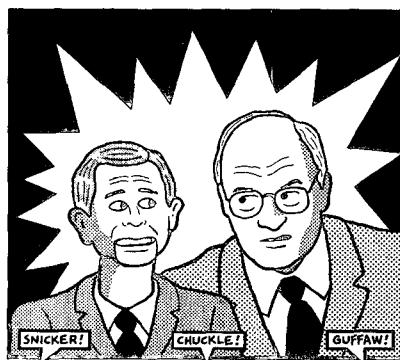
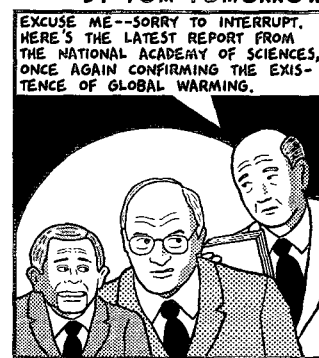
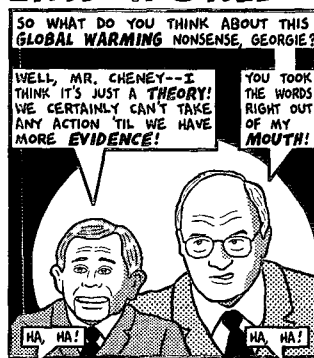
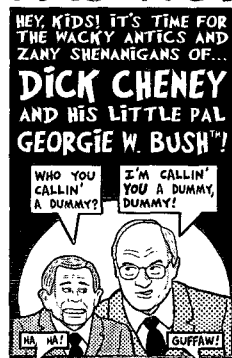
IMC volunteers later learned that Canadian police in Quebec had arrested three suspects unrelated to the IMC in the stolen documents case, yet the order still stood. "The fact that the government did not immediately remove the order confirmed our suspicions that the point was not to get to the bottom of that particular case," Lawson says, "but to harass us."

The IMC was preparing to file a challenge in court when the government withdrew the order and now is undecided about further legal action, which could render a legal precedent on the constitutionality of such practices.

Abbas Khan

THIS MODERN WORLD

BY TOM TOMORROW



The Choice is Theirs

When he announced his switch from Republican to independent, Vermont Sen. James Jeffords said choice was one of the "fundamental issues" about which he and the Bush team disagreed. With Jeffords' switch, Democrats took control of Senate committees—a change that the Feminist Majority Foundation says "will be crucial to reproductive rights, as pro-choice Democrats will replace anti-choice Republicans." So, choice is safer today, right?

In some critical ways, yes. The Bush team's biggest fear is that Democrats will hold up key appointments—especially confirmations to the judiciary. The Democratic leadership could do to the Republicans what Sen. Trent Lott did to the Clinton administration for eight years: simply refuse to bring nominations up for a vote. But there's reason to believe they won't. For all their fighting words, the Democrats confirmed Ted Olson—a conservative attorney who has fought aggressively against women's rights and affirmative action—as solicitor general. The Democrats had the power to filibuster Olson's confirmation (the vote was tight: 51 to 47), but the party leadership decided not to act. Conciliation was the better part of valor, they explained.

And that's how choice could fall victim to Capitol Hill brinkmanship. Focused on the Supreme Court, Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle likely will let lesser appointments slide by. But talk to abortion providers, and you find that those appointments are often where the real action is. It's at the local level that anti-Roe folks can pull the plug on women's rights—to little fanfare but maximum effect.

Consider the case of Denise O'Donnell. For the past two and a half years, O'Donnell, as U.S. attorney for the Western District of New York, pursued the killer of Buffalo obstetrician Barnett Slepian. After a complicated international investigation, police in France finally arrested James Charles Kopp, the alleged assassin. On May 4, O'Donnell's office filed papers seeking

Kopp's extradition to New York to stand trial. Since France does not extradite suspects who face capital punishment, Attorney General John Ashcroft had to assure French government officials that prosecutors would not seek to execute Kopp, who faces a



state murder charge and the additional charge of violating the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (FACE). A decision on extradition is due June 28.

In New York, federal prosecutors picked up Loretta Claire Marra and Dennis John Malvasi of Brooklyn, and charged them with aiding the fugitive Kopp. Eleanor Smeal of the Feminist Majority Foundation told Women's Enews that if O'Donnell hadn't spearheaded the case, Kopp might never have been caught. In her investigation of Slepian's murder, O'Donnell made crucial, political choices to cast a wide net in the belief that Kopp didn't act alone. In doing so, she trailed Kopp and his associates across the Atlantic and brought what Smeal calls an "international anti-choice conspiracy" to light.

But O'Donnell won't be on hand to prosecute, if and when the Kopp case finally makes it to court. On March 15, George W. Bush demanded her resignation in the middle of her four-year term. She vacated her office on May 31.

U.S. attorneys, appointed by the president, generally tender their resignations when a new administration takes office. But there have been exceptions. In O'Donnell's case, both New York Sens. Hillary Clinton and Chuck Schumer

asked the White House to permit O'Donnell to complete her term. No dice. Although no new nominee has been named yet, the most likely replacement is a conservative Republican judge currently on the state family court. Kathleen M. Mehlretter, the district's former deputy attorney, is temporarily filling the post.

If the Democrats are out for "conciliation," it's unlikely that they will deem the U.S. attorney post serious enough to merit a grand fight. But for beleaguered abortion providers, the U.S. attorney is all-important. By enforcing clinic protection laws like FACE, O'Donnell made it possible for people like Marilyn Buckham, the administrator of the clinic where Slepian worked, to concentrate on providing health care, instead of having to focus on raising millions of dollars for clinic repairs, staff protec-

It's at the local level that anti-Roe folks can pull the plug on women's rights—to little fanfare but maximum effect.

tion and lawsuits simply to get criminals into court. As Buckham told Women's Enews in May: "For what we went through, thank God it was under the [Clinton] administration."

National pro-choice groups usually confine their work to electing pro-choice candidates and lobbying against abortion restrictions and anti-choice Supreme Court justices. As critical as Washington is, the spotlight on federal judicial nominations obscures another crucial area in the fight for choice—one much closer to home.

Schumer sits on the Senate Judiciary Committee. Maybe he and his colleagues will be able to block the incoming U.S. attorney candidate and demand O'Donnell's reinstatement. That will depend on whether Democratic leaders consider the post important enough—and how much heat they get from their constituents. ■

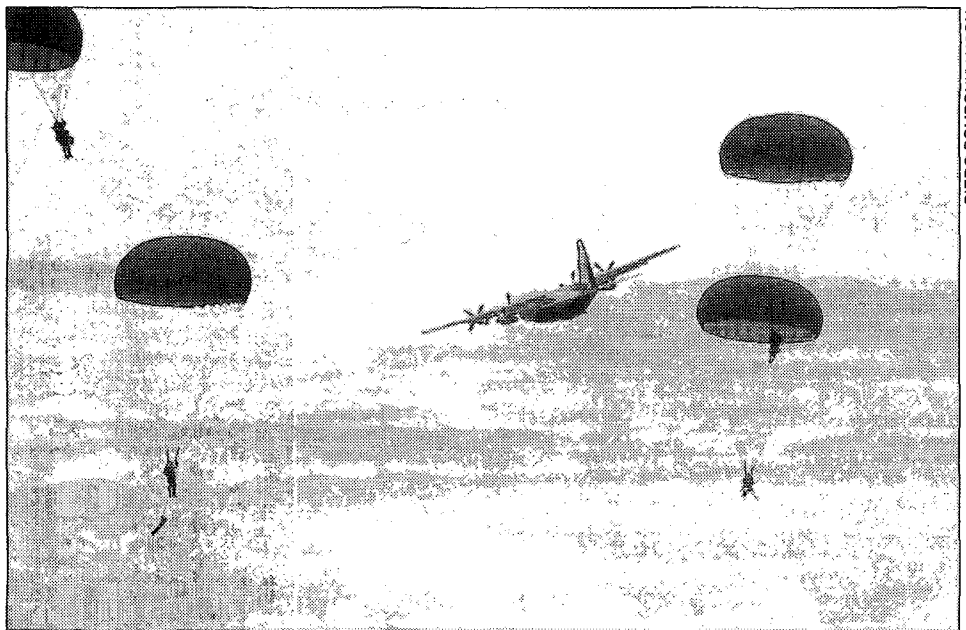
In mid-March, Valmore Locarno Rodriguez and Victor Orcasita were riding from their jobs at the Loma coal mine in northern Colombia. Locarno and Orcasita were president and vice president of the union at the mine, a local of Sintramienergetica, one of Colombia's two coal miners' unions. As the company bus neared Valledupar, 30 miles from the mine, it was stopped by 15 gunmen, some in military uniforms.

They began checking the identification of the workers, and when they found the two union leaders, they were pulled off the bus. Locarno was hit in the head with a rifle butt. One of the gunmen then shot him in the face, as his fellow workers on the bus watched in horror. Orcasita was taken off into the woods at the side of the road. There he was tortured. When his body was found later, his fingernails had been torn off.

Leading a union often means losing a job, even blacklisting. In many countries, it can bring imprisonment by governments who view unions as a threat to the social and economic elite. But the most dangerous country by far is Colombia, where labor activism is often punished with death. By mid-May, 44 Colombian trade union leaders already had been murdered this year. Last year, assassinations cost the lives of 129 others. According to Hector Fajardo, general secretary of the United Confederation of Workers (CUT), the country's largest union federation, 3,800 trade unionists have been assassinated since 1986. Out of every five trade unionists killed in the world, three are Colombian.

U.S. energy, trade and military policies are contributing to the devastation of the country's labor movement. Bush administration energy policies encourage the use of coal in U.S. power plants, and millions of tons are now mined for export by U.S. corporations in the midst of Colombia's civil war. Free market economic reforms, pushed by the International Monetary Fund, are provoking a wave of resistance by Colombian labor, which is being met by violent repression. And U.S. military aid provided by Plan Colombia supports activities by right-wing paramilitary groups, who in turn target trade union leaders.

The Loma mine is owned by Drummond Co., a multinational corporation based in Birmingham, Alabama. Drummond opened the mine in 1994, and it is now Colombia's second largest. At first, according to Ken Zinn of the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM), Drummond promised its U.S. workers that it wouldn't import Colombian coal to compete with its U.S. operations. But since 1994, Drummond has



PIERO POMPONILIAISON

The wave of death and violence is made possible by U.S. military support.

THE COLOMBIAN CONNECTION

U.S. aid fuels a dirty war against unions

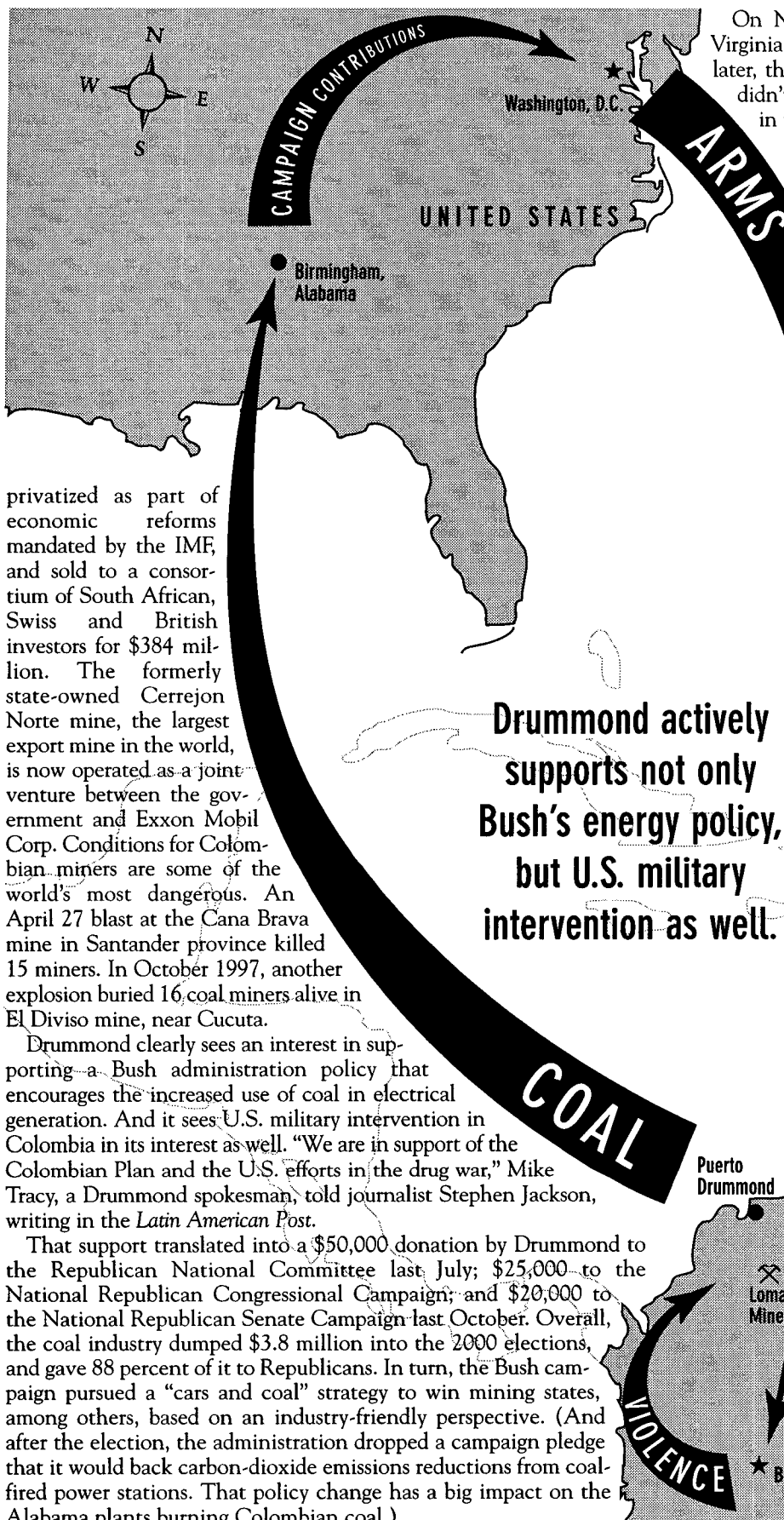
By David Bacon

closed five mines in Alabama, laying off 1,700 members of the United Mine Workers. Its one remaining U.S. mine employs about 500 miners.

Alabama used to export coal—13 million tons in 1996, mostly from Drummond mines. Last year's exports totaled only 3 million tons. But 5 million tons of Colombian coal crossed the Alabama State Docks in Mobile last year. It was bound for plants operated by the Alabama Power Co., a division of the Southern Co., which also operates generating facilities in Florida and Mississippi. The plants were formerly fueled by Drummond's U.S. mines. Another half million tons went to the Alabama Electrical Cooperative.

At the Loma mine, production rose 4 million tons in 2000, to a total of 11.8 million, after the company built a huge drag line. The company expects to sell 15 million tons next year, and 25 million tons by 2006. For Drummond the transfer has resulted in substantial savings on labor costs. A union miner in Alabama earns \$18 an hour, or \$3,060 a month, plus benefits. At the Loma mine, wages range from about \$500 to \$1,000 a month. Mineworkers Vice President Jerry Jones says Drummond transferred operations to Colombia "knowing that country's hostile political climate and egregious human rights violations."

Colombia is the world's fourth-largest coal exporter—it shipped 30 million tons of coal in 2000, worth \$794 million. Coal is the country's third-largest source of export earnings. Last year the government's mines in central Colombia were



privatized as part of economic reforms mandated by the IMF, and sold to a consortium of South African, Swiss and British investors for \$384 million. The formerly state-owned Cerrejon Norte mine, the largest export mine in the world, is now operated as a joint venture between the government and Exxon Mobil Corp. Conditions for Colombian miners are some of the world's most dangerous. An April 27 blast at the Cana Brava mine in Santander province killed 15 miners. In October 1997, another explosion buried 16 coal miners alive in El Diviso mine, near Cucuta.

Drummond clearly sees an interest in supporting a Bush administration policy that encourages the increased use of coal in electrical generation. And it sees U.S. military intervention in Colombia in its interest as well. "We are in support of the Colombian Plan and the U.S. efforts in the drug war," Mike Tracy, a Drummond spokesman, told journalist Stephen Jackson, writing in the *Latin American Post*.

That support translated into a \$50,000 donation by Drummond to the Republican National Committee last July; \$25,000 to the National Republican Congressional Campaign; and \$20,000 to the National Republican Senate Campaign last October. Overall, the coal industry dumped \$3.8 million into the 2000 elections, and gave 88 percent of it to Republicans. In turn, the Bush campaign pursued a "cars and coal" strategy to win mining states, among others, based on an industry-friendly perspective. (And after the election, the administration dropped a campaign pledge that it would back carbon-dioxide emissions reductions from coal-fired power stations. That policy change has a big impact on the Alabama plants burning Colombian coal.)

On November 3, Bush told a crowd in West Virginia, where he would beat Al Gore four days later, that "coal is going to energize America." He didn't promise, however, that it would be mined in the United States.

Colombia's rightist paramilitary army, the United Self-Defense Group (AUC), was blamed for the murders of Locarno and Orcasita by the local police commander. According to Ken Zinn of the ICEM, the AUC had issued a number of death threats against the leaders of the union at the Loma mine, accusing them of being in league with the country's main guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). "In the conflict a lot of assumptions are made quickly," explains Rafael Albuquerque, who represents the International Labor Organization in Colombia. "One of those assumptions is that many union leaders support the guerrillas."

The region has been the scene of intense conflict between the FARC and the AUC. The guerrillas allegedly levy a 10 percent tax on coal moving by rail out of the mine, which Drummond has refused to pay, and the 215-mile rail line to Puerto Drummond on the coast was bombed five times in the last year. In response, company President Gary Drummond visited Colombian President Andres Pastrana last year to demand increased protection.

Locarno and Orcasita themselves had repeatedly pleaded with the company for protection. In a meeting just a week before the assassinations, the union demanded that Drummond provide security for its workers, and that the company abide by a previous agreement allowing them to sleep overnight at the mine. The company ignored the agreement and refused to allow the men to stay. Protesting the deaths of their leaders, 1,200 miners at Loma briefly stopped working.

The mining union leaders have not been the only targets of the AUC. On March 22, just days after the murders in Valledupar, two leaders of the Colombian electrical workers union, Andres Granados and Jaime Sanchez, were gunned down. In mid-March, Eugenio Sanchez Diaz, a union activist in the oil town of Barrancabermeja, was dragged from his home and shot in the street. On the last day of March, Jaime Alberto Duque Castro, leader of the El Cairo Cement Workers Union, was kidnapped by armed gunmen. Another union leader, Ricardo Orozco, vice president of the Colombian Hospital Workers Union, had his name on a list of 50 union leaders in Barranquilla, which was circulated by the paramilitary death squads. He was shot by a gunman in April, and his death was followed by two days of national labor protest.

Robin Kirk, who monitors human rights abuses in Colombia for Human Rights Watch, says that there are strong ties between the paramilitaries and the Colombian military. "The Colombian military and intelligence apparatus has been virulently anti-Communist since the '50s," she says, "and they look at trade unionists as subversives—as a very real and potential threat. Generally they see groups on the left as linked to the ideology that led to the formation of guerrilla groups."

Violence against trade unionists is part of a larger context of violence against community leaders and human rights activists. According to the Colombian Commission of Jurists, 6,000 Colombians were killed as the result of social and political violence in 2000. The CCJ attributes 80 percent of the killings to the paramilitaries, 15 percent to the guerrillas and 5 percent directly to the government. But Roberto Molino of the CCJ says that "in the case of the paramilitaries, you cannot underestimate the collaboration of government forces."

The Colombian government also views union activity as a threat because it challenges its basic economic policies. The Pastrana administration is under pressure from the IMF and World Bank to cut the public sector budget, causing mass terminations, along with cuts in education, health care and pensions. In January, finance minister Juan Manuel Santos announced measures that would close many state agencies, laying off 42,000 workers. The money would be used to pay the country's debt to foreign banks and lending institutions, making Colombia more attractive to foreign investors. In March, the General Confederation of Democratic Workers organized a 24-hour strike of 700,000 workers, including 300,000 teachers and education employees, protesting the layoffs. On June 7, tens of thousands of Colombian workers took to the streets in marches across the country opposing the IMF.

The Colombian Federation of Educators (FECODE) struck on May 15 for 48 hours over Santos' proposal to cut the education budget by \$340 million. FECODE President Gloria Ines Ramirez predicted that the cuts would deprive 500,000 Colombian children of an education, and 3 million people have already signed petitions opposing them. Health care workers also joined the strike. "We will not allow the government to make budget cuts for two of the most important necessities for our poorest sector simply to pay interest on the foreign debt," Ines declared.

Labor's strong reaction to the Colombian murders stands in contrast to its silence during the Reagan-era covert wars in Central America.

Being a teachers union activist in Colombia is as dangerous as being a coal mine leader. Since 1986, 418 educators have been murdered. In just one week in early May, Dario de Jesus Silva, a 22-year veteran teacher in Antioquia, and Juan Carlos Castro Zapata, another school worker in the same province, were assassinated. Both were activists in the teachers' union ADIDA. On May 14, Julio Alberto Otero, a university lecturer and union activist, was also killed.

The IMF mandate for privatization has been just as bitterly resisted. The union for workers at the government corporation EMCALI, which provides garbage, water and electricity to Cali city residents, has fought the company's sell-off. One of the union's activists, Carlos Eliecer Prado, was killed in May. "Colombian trade unionists have been targeted by dark forces moving inside

the state," a union statement warned. "They seek to silence through assassination, eviction or terror those who are against privatization and those who defend human rights."

The wave of death and violence is made possible by growing U.S. aid to the Colombian armed forces. Under Plan Colombia, the United States has funneled more than \$1 billion into the country, almost entirely in the form of military assistance. Colombia is the third-largest recipient of U.S. military aid in the world. The money funds a dirty war against all critics of the Colombian social and economic order, including unionists.

This spring, the United Steelworkers sent a formal delegation to Colombia in the wake of the murders of Locarno and Orcasita. The delegation met with leaders of the CUT. After the delegation made its report, Steelworkers President Leo Gerard warned the U.S. government, "We are strongly opposed to the amount of military aid being sent to the Colombian army when trade unionists and innocent people are being killed by the very military forces we are financing."

The Steelworkers' criticism follows a position taken by the AFL-CIO last year, which also called for ending military assistance. Labor's strong reaction to the Colombian murders stands in contrast to its relative silence during the Reagan administration-sponsored wars in Central America in the '80s. During that era, Cold War anti-communism led AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland to try to suppress widespread criticism of U.S. foreign policy in union ranks. Kirkland and other labor conservatives accused most Colombian unions of being too left-wing. In turn, the Colombians, like many Third World labor federations, accused the AFL-CIO of supporting only anti-communist unions that defended U.S. foreign policy.

Today, U.S. unions want relations with all sectors of Colombian labor, and use a single standard in calling for the defense of unions under attack. "Trade union rights are human rights, and our union will fight to protect them everywhere," Gerard says. "We demand that the Colombian government protect all trade unionists in their country and do everything in its power to bring these assassins to justice." ■



BY GEOV PARRISH

For months the Pentagon's space warriors and the White House's space cadets have publicly fantasized about scrapping the world's arms control structure and hurtling forward with National Missile Defense (NMD): a costly, perhaps technically impossible system intended to protect the United States from attack by a long-range missile threat that—with the exception of about 20 warheads in China—doesn't exist.

"Missile defense doesn't make any sense, and everybody realizes that," says retired Rear Adm. Eugene J. Carroll of the Center for Defense Information. "The least likely threat we face is some third-rate nation developing an ICBM and launching it at the United States knowing they will get back 50 times what they send. There are all kinds of ways that are cheaper and more reliable—smuggling in a suitcase bomb, for example—to inflict harm and not be subject to instantaneous retaliation."

The idea of hitting incoming missiles with outgoing missiles as some sort of "shield" has been around as a Pentagon concept for at least four decades. And Ronald Reagan, George Bush Sr., Bill Clinton and Congress, under both parties, have steadily funded—at least \$60 billion since the budget-busting "Star Wars" delusions of the '80s—the often futile research. Now, George II and his merry band of

Strangelovian pranksters are pushing funding for the next generation of research (and, eventually, at least another \$200 billion) by citing the missile threat of "rogue states" like North Korea or Iran and trying to develop China as a new Cold War enemy. The Bush administration is likely to get at least some of what they want. Activists have followed the noise, bracing themselves for a looming congressional battle.

But on another, perhaps more dangerous front, there's almost no vocal opposition. Theater Missile Defense (TMD) is the quiet sibling of NMD. In last year's budget, Pentagon funding for the two was about equally divided. The Clinton administration already cut a deal with Russia to create exceptions to the ABM treaty to accommodate TMD, so research is further along. And leading Democrats who have expressed reservations about NMD, like new Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Joseph Biden (D-Delaware), want to proceed full speed ahead on TMD.

TMD is more politically achievable and technically feasible, and, because it is to be deployed on land, sea, air and space around the world, much more immediately threatening to allies and potential enemies alike. When Europe, China, Russia and the rest of the world have sent up howls about the Bush administration's ballistic missile plans, TMD is what frightens them the most.

Defining the difference between NMD and TMD systems has been bugging military and arms control planners for years because while the stated intent differs, technically there isn't much difference at all. Essentially, while NMD is designed to protect the U.S. mainland from long-range missile attack, TMD is designed to protect U.S. troop deployments, bases and allies against short- and medium-range missile attacks—the kind of missiles that rogue states already have and can deploy. A 1997 ABM protocol agreement between Clinton and Boris Yeltsin defined the differences, for the purposes of arms control treaties, in two ways: by limiting a TMD system's geographic size, and by limiting the height, trajectory and speed with which missile interceptors can travel (and hence, the distance it can cover).

Like NMD, the Pentagon plans to deploy TMD facilities from as many platforms as possible: fixed sites, trucks, ships, submarines, planes and satellites. But TMD is far more flexible. If the NMD, for example, is designed to counter the North Korean threat of a long-range missile, it can't respond to a similar threat from a different country, or a different threat from the same country. Even if NMD can be made to work, it's as inflexible as it is expensive; this is why, as French President Jacques Chirac recently noted, the sword always defeats the shield. Chirac, unlike Dubya, remembers the Maginot Line.

TMD has a number of components; together, they could be deployed in Japan, for example, to protect U.S. bases from North Korea; or they could be deployed more provocatively to encircle China with platforms in Japan, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, Australia and at sea. But no single system can perform multiple duties. That's why the natural evolution for TMD systems—especially if the United States ignores the ABM treaty—is to bundle them.

The 1997 Clinton-Yeltsin agreement prohibited this, but China, Russia and Europe reason that if the Bushites intend to develop NMD anyway, they could just as easily develop TMD as a global system, intended to attack the types of cheaper, more plentiful missiles that most countries rely upon. If TMD systems around the globe are managed using a shared tracking and coordination system, the Pentagon suddenly would have a global system designed not just to protect the U.S. mainland, but as a forward, much more immediate network that could impose American will anywhere on the planet.

TMD relies upon a number of different weapons systems, one of which is already in operation (the Patriot PAC-2, a successor to the missiles deployed with such famous inaccuracy during the Gulf War).

The rest are under development. They can be divided into two types: those that target missiles in the early "boost phase," and those that target missiles in later stages.

The later-stage systems also have two types of components, lower-tier and upper-tier. These are meant to be a layered approach to defend in the lower or upper atmosphere, and vary in their trajectory, speed and potential distance. Lower-tier TMD systems include the truck-mounted, short-range (600 km) Patriot PAC-2; the PAC-3, with a longer range (1,500 km) and wider area under its "shield" (40 to 50 km); the MEADS (Medium-range Extended Air Defense System); and the Navy Area Defense, a chance for another service to get in on the funding with a short-range, ship-based system capable of shielding 50 to 100 km.

Then there are the upper-tier, high-altitude TMD systems. THAAD (Theater High Altitude Area Defense), whose spectacular test failures predated those of NMD last year, is ground-based but transportable by aircraft. It includes short and medium-range missiles with a range of up to 3,500 km, and an umbrella of a few hundred kilometers. The ship-based equivalent, with a similar range but larger shield, is the Navy



The U.S. Space Command's "Vision for 2020" makes the Pentagon's intentions clear: "Dominating the space dimension of military operations to protect U.S. interests and investment."

Theater Wide: It can only intercept very high missiles, at an altitude above 80 to 100 km. A second generation, Navy Theater Wide Block II, is planned for after 2010. Each upper-tier system would have a larger defended area if a satellite-based missile tracking system now being developed is deployed. Unlike THAAD, which was exempted in the Clinton/Yeltsin agreement, Navy Theater Wide is being developed in violation of the ABM treaty.

All of these systems propose to use technology similar to NMD. But TMD, with its more immediate global reach, gets the Pentagon closer to where it really wants to go: space.

The U.S. Space Command's "Vision for 2020" pulls no punches about the intent or purpose of what the Pentagon is developing: "Dominating the space dimension of military operations to protect U.S. interests and investment." The Airborne Laser (ABL) system, a "boost phase" component of TMD, is envisioned as a high-altitude laser. Its technology dovetails with another project approved last December by the Department of Defense: the Space-Based Laser. Both eventually will be able not only to intercept missiles, but to attack fixed targets anywhere. A second space-based laser, the Alpha High-Energy Laser, is already under development and in testing.

These are the highest expressions of Theater Missile Defense, and their clear intent is to control the world. As Sen. Bob Smith (R-New Hampshire) says: "It is our manifest destiny [to control space]. You know we went from the East Coast to the West Coast of the United States of America settling the continent and they call that manifest destiny, and the next continent, if you will, the next frontier, is space and it goes on forever."

The Pentagon's focus is not on the vision sold to the public of protecting the country with NMD from attack by weapons that don't exist, from dictators who won't live long enough or ever have enough money to develop them. Instead, its goal is to enforce American preferences and provide military protection for the U.S. economic regime (i.e., to "protect U.S. interests and investment"). Institutions like the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund and World Bank, as well as pacts like NAFTA and the FTAA, are intended to enforce transnational corporate desires for economic and political policies; the Pentagon is planning to ensure that nobody, anywhere, steps out of line.

Beyond the ABM treaty, the United States plans, with much less domestic opposition, to run roughshod over another, even more basic pact: the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, the fundamental international agreement on the use of space. On November 20, 2000, the U.N. General Assembly, in a resolution titled "Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space," reiterated that 1967 pact; 163 countries supported the resolu-

tion, and only three—the United States, Israel and Micronesia—abstained. "Our affiliates in Japan, South Korea and the Middle East understand the implications [of TMD], because that's where the United States wants to deploy it first," says Bruce Gagnon, coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. "Developing NMD is a Trojan horse for the real Star Wars that's coming down the road."

Gagnon sees TMD, not NMD, as the route to this apocalyptic long-term vision. "[Support of TMD] seems to be endemic within the Democratic Party," he adds. "They're against NMD deployment, but they think [TMD] deployment is the way to go to protect our troops and ships, when in fact it's very much part of the U.S. first-strike policy in places like the Pacific."

And because Democrats like Biden enthusiastically support TMD under the guise of protecting U.S. troops aboard, Gagnon charges, even peace groups like Project Abolition, Peace Action and the Council for a Livable World—all of which oppose Bush on NMD—are refusing to take a stand against TMD or the R&D efforts that Gagnon predicts eventually will make some sort of space-based system inevitable.

At the conclusion of George W. Bush's tense trip to Europe in June, the United States was handed a completely predictable threat from Russian President Vladimir Putin: If the United States persists in planning to violate international ballistic missile agreements, so will Russia. One of the biggest criticisms leveled at NMD is that it will trigger a new, global arms race. That criticism

has had an impact on congressional consideration of NMD, as has the price tag and the succession of favorably rigged but still disastrous test results.

Yet none of those problems seem to be slowing down the funding for research, development and deployment of TMD. In an interview after Bush's Europe trip, Biden was explicit on this point: "No one is saying don't spend the money on the research. No one is saying don't continue down this road."

Would any of it work? Who knows? TMD might not intercept missiles very well, but it will unquestionably succeed in enraging the world and enriching military contractors. The smoke you smell is a combination of your tax dollars being burned, and the torches of 6 billion angry people marching up the hill toward our castle. ■

For more information on Theater Missile Defense, visit the Web sites of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space (www.space4peace.org), the Union of Concerned Scientists (www.ucsusa.org), the Council for a Livable World (www.clw.org) and the Center for Defense Information (www.cdi.org).

"IT IS OUR MANIFEST DESTINY. THE NEXT FRONTIER IS SPACE AND IT GOES ON FOREVER."

FAST TRACK IS BACK

BUT THE POLITICAL CLIMATE HAS CHANGED

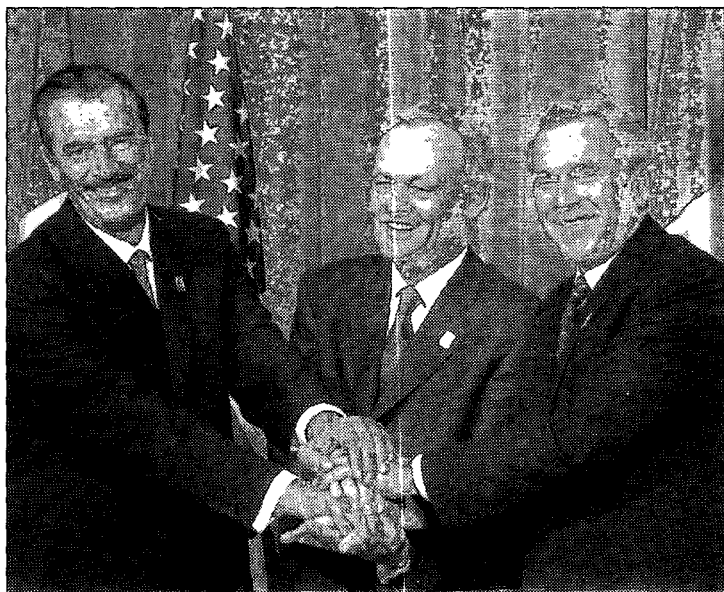
By David Moberg

There's an old adage that trade negotiators think their work is like riding a bicycle: Either they keep pedaling forward or the bicycle—the new global economy—falls down. But after a decade marked by major steps in global economic “liberalization”—more accurately described as “deregulation” or “corporate regulation”—it is time to stop for a minute and ask which way this bicycle is headed and whether we want to go there.

The next big domestic political battle on globalization may come as early as this summer over a proposal to grant President Bush special “trade promotion authority”—better known as “fast track”—that would push trade deals through Congress with minimal debate. It will pit the fast-pedalers against a wide range of groups, especially the labor and environmental movements, who advocate what Economic Policy Institute President Jeff Faux calls a “strategic pause” in the current course of globalization.

Congress failed to renew fast track authority for President Clinton in 1997 and 1998. First it was withdrawn without a vote, then it was defeated. The vote united the majority of Democrats and a small bloc of Republicans, many of them conservative nationalists. Now, in a much different political climate, with a narrowly divided Congress and a Republican president, conservative Illinois Republican Rep. Phil Crane has introduced legislation for new fast track authority. Bush has staked his personal reputation on fast track, promising foreign leaders—such as those at the Quebec Summit of the Americas—that he would get it and claiming that the United States would be crippled in negotiating major deals, such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) or a new round of World Trade Organization agreements, without it.

Fast track proponents argue that the president needs such authority to conclude big trade deals. Otherwise factions within Congress will pick apart agreements that have been carefully crafted with a variety of trade-offs, and foreign government negotiators will not have confidence that U.S. negotiators can deliver on their promises. Of course, the first



Mexican President Vicente Fox, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien and George W. Bush join hands in Quebec.

ALFONSO MURILLO/NOTIMEX/PHOTO

question should be what new global trade agreements, if any, are needed now? Setting that crucial issue aside, it is clear that fast track isn't necessary, even if it is convenient for negotiators to restrict democratic review of their handiwork. Presidents have only invoked fast track authority five times over a period in which hundreds of trade deals have been negotiated. Indeed, just before leaving office, Clinton trade representative Charlene Barshefsky admitted that fast track authority wasn't really necessary.

Critics repeatedly have argued that fast track is inherently undemocratic and that agreements like NAFTA and the WTO should be handled like treaties. Moreover, progressives insist that any legislated trade authority should require negotiators to include protections for labor rights and the environment, and that those protections should be enforced in the same manner as protections for intellectual property or other commercial goals—including the option of trade sanctions.

The Crane legislation, however, specifically prohibits trade negotiators from including such enforceable labor and environmental provisions in the core of future trade agreements. This free market fundamentalism is out of touch with changing popular sentiment. Earlier this year, even major corporations in the Business Roundtable acknowledged that they could support some provisions for labor and environment in new fast track legislation. The hard line taken by Crane has, for the moment, stiffened Democratic opposition to trade promotion authority. Some influential Democrats with a history of voting as “free traders,” such as Montana Sen. Max Baucus and California Rep. Robert Matsui, a leading proponent of fast track and NAFTA, have insisted the new legislation include strong labor and environmental protections.

The political prospects for Bush are also complicated by the slowing economy and the growing, record-breaking U.S. trade deficits. The buoyant growth of the late '90s temporarily masked the effects of globalization on jobs, but since the spring of 1998—while overall unemployment was low—the U.S.

manufacturing sector has lost about 750,000 jobs, with much of the loss a result of imports or investment shifts overseas.

The steel industry, faced with foreign producers dumping products in the U.S. market below their costs of production, has been in crisis for three years, during which time there have been nearly 18,000 layoffs and 18 company bankruptcies. With a growing number of Republicans joining Democrats in a call for action, Bush has agreed to ask the U.S. International Trade Commission to determine whether unfair trade practices have injured the industry enough to impose (within WTO guidelines) broad restrictions on steel imports.

The move, which Europeans and others have denounced as protectionism, was widely seen as a move (one that Clinton had rejected) to defuse a hot trade issue and win support for fast track. But the Steelworkers, despite administration pleas, continue to oppose fast track. In any case, simply undertaking an investigation does not guarantee action. And Bush is not supporting a bipartisan bill that would restrain imports for five years, tax all steel sold to share the pension costs of retired and displaced Steelworkers, guarantee loans for modernization, and encourage worldwide negotiations over reduction in global overcapacity.

The record on NAFTA, the model for Bush's high-priority negotiation of a new FTAA, also has increased public skepticism about the current direction of trade negotiations. While NAFTA may account for the net loss of as many as 766,000 jobs in the United States from 1994 to 2000, according to a recent EPI report, it has done very little to protect labor rights or improve the environment in Mexico, Canada or the United States.

This track record, along with the evolution of the movement against corporate globalization, has also forged greater unity among a larger number of labor, environmental and citizens groups. Now the coalition, which is being coordinated by the AFL-CIO, includes organizations like Oxfam, Human Rights Watch, feminist groups and new religious alliances that were not active in earlier fast track battles. Moderate environmental groups like World Wildlife Fund and Natural Resources Defense Council, which Clinton persuaded to support NAFTA, are now also on board. Many congressional Democrats and citizens groups are so angered by Bush's aggressive conservatism that they are even less inclined than usual to negotiate some compromise that would give Bush the appearance of a victory.

At the same time, citizens groups have raised the stakes. The AFL-CIO now demands that trade agreements "must not undermine public services or public health, nor allow individual investors to challenge state laws in secret," as NAFTA's infamous Chapter 11 protection of investor rights has permitted. Also, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney says that "trade authority must delineate responsibilities for investors, not just rights, and must not require privatization and deregulation as a condition of market access."

Republican strategists are concentrating first on trying to consolidate their own party's support. Some—but not all—of the 40 or so Republicans who have voted against fast track or other globalization initiatives are likely to be persuaded that they must support their president (just as some wavering Democrats were loyal to Clinton when he was in office). Then the Republicans likely will offer the minimum possible concessions to win over a few Democrats. The pro-

corporate Democratic Leadership Council, for instance, has praised Bush's trade principles as a "reasonable start," lauding him for not insisting on trade sanctions to enforce labor rights but chiding him for failing to support the International Labor Organization. There is a chance that Republicans might agree to language permitting negotiation of labor and environmental protections that would be enforced only with fines rather than trade sanctions. While this would be relatively ineffective as enforcement, it might give political cover to pro-corporate, free-trade Democrats to vote for fast track.

However fitfully, workers rights and the environment are becoming part of the mainstream debate over globalization, creating new problems for the Bush administration. The administration still has not submitted the completed free trade agreement with Jordan to Congress, partly because the Republican right-wing is so opposed to provisions in the treaty text that prohibit the countries from relaxing labor or environmental laws to gain trade or investment advantage. Some Republican strategists argue for adding a letter of understanding that only fines, not trade sanctions, will be used, even though most people read the treaty as permitting the use of sanctions. On another front, the proposed free trade agreement with Vietnam, which does not include protections of workers or the environment, threatens to undermine an innovative and apparently fairly successful agreement that permits Cambodia to increase its exports of garments and textiles to the United States as it improves protections of labor rights.

Workers rights are more important in the fast track debate in part because globalization has created new problems. The ILO reports that forced labor, slavery and criminal trafficking in human beings, especially women and children, are rising and taking "new and insidious forms." Although it has no enforcement power, the ILO last fall asked all of its government, business and labor members to do whatever they could to avoid contributing to the widespread use of forced labor in Burma by the military government, often in support of foreign investors' projects. In response, the AFL-CIO and the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) protested this spring at shareholder meetings of Unocal and Halliburton (Dick Cheney's old firm) for their involvement in Burmese projects, and a bipartisan group of senators introduced legislation to ban all imports from Burma.

But without—at a minimum—strong and enforceable language in all global economic agreements, the process of globalization will continue to undermine workers everywhere. Labor, environmental and other citizens groups are likely to turn the debate over trade promotion authority into a symbolic battle over globalization itself. "The fast track debate becomes a proxy for globalization and a referendum on NAFTA, because FTAA is an extension of NAFTA and fast track's most immediate importance would be to facilitate FTAA," argues Mark Levinson, director of research and policy for UNITE, the garment and textile union. "On FTAA we're highlighting hemispheric-wide union opposition. This is an anti-worker approach to the global economy. It's bad for workers here and in developing countries, and that's what we're against." ■

Alone in the Crowd



By G. Pascal Zachary

M LONDON

idway through his first term as Britain's prime minister, Tony Blair rode a new subway line one morning and, surrounded by reporters, tried to converse with the lone passenger in his car. The woman, wearing headphones, seemed to purposefully ignore him, refusing to respond—even when Blair persisted, practically jumping up and down before her eyes and begging her to chit-chat.

Politicians mingle with ordinary people awkwardly here, if at all, and Blair vigilantly looks out for opportunities to shatter stereotypes. After all, he is the first leader of the Labour Party ever to win re-election as prime minister, and his latest victory, on June 7, gave fresh legitimacy to his campaign to democratize this still shockingly hierarchical and elitist country and to "reconnect," as he puts it, people with politics.

Ordinary citizens ignore Blair at their peril, however, as this poor woman found out. The next day, Blair summoned her to 10 Downing Street. By then London's tabloids had splashed her picture across the country, and her employer had professed puzzlement over her inability to connect with the prime minister. The woman defended herself, saying she recognized Blair, and meant him no disrespect, but preferred silence to conversation. (While Blair humiliated her, essentially making her stay after class as punishment, at least he

didn't hit her. During the campaign, Blair's deputy prime minister knocked out a heckler with a right cross.)

As these anecdotes suggest, Blair is no man of the people. But since there is no term limit for a British prime minister, pundits already talk confidently of Blair winning a third term. His dominance of British politics—no prime minister in 20th century ever won such large majorities in two successive elections—confirms that he is the most significant leader in Europe today. Neither Lionel Jospin nor Gerhard Schröder, the prime ministers of France and Germany, command Blair-like support among voters, and Romano Prodi, president of the European Union, is appointed.

That Blair is aligned with the left, through the Labour Party's historic base, makes his position all the more significant. In a period of neoliberal economic crisis—when the terms of globalization are routinely called into question even by the engineers of corporate dominance, and economic growth is slowing across the world—Europe potentially offers a powerful counterweight to Washington's version of *laissez-faire*. But while Blair once talked about finding "a third way" between corporate capitalism and socialism, he now seems content to revel in Britain's benign combination of low unemployment and low inflation, ignoring the country's low productivity and low living standards.

Will Tony Blair lead Britain away from a united Europe?

Blair's first four years in office, while bringing an end to 18 years of Conservative Party rule, were marked by caution. The *Financial Times* recently set the terms of the prime minister's predicament: "Blair was frustrated during his first term by his inability to convert good intentions into changes. ... His dilemma over how radical to be is complicated by evidence that genuine radicalism makes the public uneasy: part of Mr. Blair's appeal is that so far he has been a reassuring figure, avoiding steps that make the British people feel they are being led into the unknown."

Blair's caution has overshadowed his rhetoric. In his first term, he ran a fiscal policy that made Margaret Thatcher proud: holding a tight rein on spending and applying the government's huge surpluses to the reduction of federal debt. He ostensibly expanded local democracy, by ceding powers to new provincial governments in Scotland and Wales, but then sought to override local preferences by naming his own men to run these power centers. He tossed out hereditary peers from the House of Lords, yet refused to favor the election of members to this appointed body. Even as he exhorted the British to take welfare into their own hands, he gutted the government's own Freedom of Information Bill, ordered the national police to spy on and jail those lawfully protesting ultra-high gas taxes, and opposed the expansion of local democracy in England itself.

If Blair lacks the ideology and inclination to energize a European alternative to American-style globalization, he also lacks a commitment to the 50-year project to create a united Europe. Britain refused to join the common currency, introduced in 1999, and Blair hasn't fully committed to replacing the pound with the euro. Instead, he endorses a referendum on membership, which effectively dooms the proposition since 70 percent of the British electorate want to keep their currency. To be sure, the euro's falling value against the dollar (it trades at more than one-third below its inaugural rate) makes the currency seem dicey, but to German and French politicians this is all the more reason for Blair to stop wavering.

On the future organization of the European Union, Blair remains a stubborn enigma. He opposes both the French plan to centralize the union, making it in the words of Jospin an "economic government," and the German plan to create a "United States of Europe," where states have limited authority over some matters and none over others. Blair's inaction lends support to the "Euro-skeptics" in Britain, whose ranks have swollen on his watch. The latest polls show almost half of the British public wants to withdraw from the European Union, and nearly everyone wants to go slow on further European entanglements. (Indeed, a vocal minority favors joining the United States, or at least swapping the pound for the U.S. dollar and trading membership in the European Union for membership in NAFTA.)

While Blair steadfastly expresses his allegiance to the European ideal, he talks most passionately not about Europe's prospects, but about Britain's "pivotal" role in world affairs. It is the opportunity to continue Britain's "special relationship" with the United States that most animates him. His quick support for military intervention in Kosovo held NATO together, overrid-

ing German reluctance. His willingness to unilaterally send British troops to Sierra Leone, preventing the collapse of the government and a resumption of civil war, rescued Washington from having to come to the West African country's aid. And he has left unchanged—over the public objections of other E.U. members—the long-standing U.S. "Echelon" program, whereby electronic surveillance of telecommunications in Western Europe is conducted from listening posts in Britain. (As George W. Bush's visit to Europe in mid-June underscored, differences between his administration and Europe's political elite are sharp, ranging from fears over the president's obsession with missile defense to his support for the death penalty to his stubborn insistence on downplaying global warming.)

Blair's stance on Europe matters because the grand European project—the idea of forming a multinational empire, stretching from Dublin to St. Petersburg—is once again in crisis. On the same day as Blair's historic re-election, Irish voters soundly rejected the so-called Treaty of Nice, which

endorses the eastward expansion of the European Union. Following the Irish vote, Prodi dismissed the results, saying the European Union would "pursue the enlargement negotiations with undiminished

vigor and determination," implying that no mere plebiscite would be allowed to derail expansion. The threat looms that the European Union will divide over whether to include the former Communist states of Central Europe and the Baltics.

Yet while clashes over E.U. expansion grab headlines, perhaps more worrisome is the quickening economic crisis in Europe, of which the falling euro is merely a symptom. With growth falling sharply in Europe's core countries, the E.U. social-welfare model faces renewed stress. The boom years of the second half of the '90s, coupled with the collapse of East Asia's economies, eased pressure on Europe (yet Germany, for instance, still met its budget requirement only by borrowing). Indeed, rising tax revenues and rising employment reduced the burden of paying for social services and transfer payments that are essentially twice as costly as those provided by the United States. With stagnation looming, Europeans must confront anew the basic contradiction of their political-economic model. Having embraced growth led and managed by corporations rather than government, the European Union and its member nations have few levers to influence the economy when the private sector buckles.

For Blair, the confusion over Europe's direction is a reminder of the political risks involved in trying to stake out bold positions in the "Old World." Europeans remain cautious, wary of social innovation no matter how much they acknowledge the necessity of adaptation. Yet paradoxically, the European Union stands as the world's most ambitious post-Cold War political project. The European Union may set the standard for how power-sharing and cooperation between nations can ease tensions and exploit synergy within geographic regions, while at the same time both preserving and transcending limited national interests. Given Tony Blair's habit of defending Britain's independence from Europe, it is ironic that he may end up deciding whether the European Union ever realizes its great promise. ■

While clashes over E.U. expansion grab headlines, more worrisome is Europe's quickening economic crisis.

Good-Bye, Good Friday?

Northern Ireland struggles to salvage the peace process

By Kelly Candaele

BELFAST

On Election Day in Northern Ireland, David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and first minister in the Northern Ireland Assembly, was roughed up by Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) supporters as he approached his polling station to vote. Trimble needed the protection of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) to get in and out of the building unharmed and ended up with a few bruises.

When the votes were counted the next day, most observers concluded that the DUP had roughed up and bruised the peace process as well, winning three closely watched races against the UUP. Trimble's party lost three parliamentary seats overall, reducing their parliamentary total from nine to six, while the Rev. Ian Paisley's party gained two Westminster seats, raising their total to five. (Northern Ireland is represented by 18 seats in the House of Commons.) Trimble won by only 2,000 votes in his own constituency, a seat he had taken by more than 10,000 votes in 1997. In the local elections, the UUP lost 31 seats, many to DUP challengers. The DUP saw its share of the vote go from 13.6 percent in 1997 to 22.5 percent. In characteristic form, Paisley claimed that the majority of unionists were now against the Good Friday peace agreement and called upon Trimble to leave office for "destroying unionism."

Meanwhile, Sinn Fein surged past the Social Democratic and Labour Party as the largest nationalist party in Northern Ireland, adding two parliamentary seats to the two they already held. Sinn Fein has attracted a younger, more dynamic group of activists by concentrating on immediate economic and social progress. Sinn Fein's Pat Doherty, who won a parliamentary seat in West Tyrone against a strong SDLP challenger, told a large gathering at the vote count that his party was now at the heart of politics in Northern Ireland. He told the unionist community, "We can work this out."

But working things out in Northern Ireland has become more difficult. The election results—both parliamentary and local council races were held on the same day—reinforced the reality that implementation of the Good Friday agreement has become more difficult than negotiating it. Even though

Trimble is the most visible pro-agreement unionist in Northern Ireland, he has led a deeply divided party into the devolved assembly. He has barely survived a number of leadership challenges over issues that would have destroyed previous UUP leaders. While Trimble is respected, even by nationalist politicians who acknowledge his political difficulties, he has allowed intransigent unionists, a group who continue to mourn their loss of domination, to shape the political debate.

The two biggest issues have been decommissioning Irish Republican Army weapons and police reform. While the IRA has allowed three inspections of arms dumps—an unprecedented action—unionist voters punished Trimble over the failure of the IRA to move toward full weapons decommissioning and for what they regard as the "gutting" of the RUC.

Reforms of the RUC that would seem mild in another context—recruiting a 50 percent Catholic force and establishing an independent oversight commission—have become political and symbolic indicators of which "community" is gaining or losing ground.

Since the IRA cease-fire in 1994 that initiated the current peace process, Sinn Fein has stated that they want to remove all guns from Northern Irish politics but only in the context of an overall implementation of the Good Friday agreement. That means thorough reform of the police force and removal of the British security apparatus, particularly in the border county of Armagh. As a result of the

June 7 election, Trimble's maneuvering room on weapons has been dramatically narrowed.

In an attempt to silence criticism from within his own party and from Paisley, Trimble had promised to resign as first minister of the Assembly on July 1 if the IRA had not commenced arms decommissioning by that date. Trimble was fishing for IRA support he is unlikely to get. But there is increasing pressure for the IRA to move in that direction. Last week, Bertie Ahern, prime minister of the Republic of Ireland, called upon Sinn Fein to put pressure on the IRA to move beyond inspections of weapons to permanent removal. Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams all but ruled out an IRA response by Trimble's deadline.

Continued on page 29



Riot-clad police officers turn children away from the gates of their school in North Belfast on June 21 following fierce fighting between rival Republican and loyalist gangs.

HUGH THOMAS/BWP MEDIA/GETTY IMAGES

To the Extreme

By Wilson Carey McWilliams

Barry Goldwater's nomination wasn't supposed to happen. As Rick Perlstein reminds his readers, in the early '60s, the "end of ideology" was orthodoxy in social science. Eisenhower and Nixon were identified with an internationalist, corporate "modern Republicanism" that conceded

Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus

By Rick Perlstein
Hill and Wang
671 pages, \$30

government's role in promoting economic prosperity and public welfare. Serious political argument seemed confined to the margins, a matter of increments rather than principles. It was, John Kenneth Galbraith was moved to write, a time when "the bland led the bland." Yet at the Republican convention in 1964, there was Goldwater, intoning lines adapted (by Harry Jaffa, a distinguished conservative student of political philosophy) from Cicero: "Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice ... moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue."

In part, Goldwater was lucky. His rivals either self-destructed like Nelson Rockefeller (who was fatally damaged by a politically messy divorce and remarriage), held back until too late like William Scranton or, like Nixon, were content to wait (eagerly) in the wings. Leaders in politics and the media—including as shrewd a judge as Lyndon Johnson—kept assuming that at some point, Republican power-brokers would take control and fend off disaster. Yet in the end, the old elites proved unable to call the tune.

Goldwater's nomination was the first great triumph of the new American conservatism, a complex coalition of right-wing moralists and libertarians, agreed in militant anti-communism abroad and opposition to "socialism" at home, united by their enemies and by resentment. As Perlstein's fine account indicates, the movement involved more than finding "ideological soul mates": It entailed a "learning how to act," the arts

of association and advocacy and a disciplined focus on the main objective willing to mute or minimize internecine quarrels. The right had its money men and its elites, its intellectuals, like Bill Buckley, and its operatives, like Clif White, but its strength lay at the grassroots, an "army of true believers" created by "organizing manuals."

Perlstein, an *In These Times* contributor named last year by *The Village Voice* as a "writer on the verge," knows how to tell a story. He treats conservatives fairly and even with some sympathy, and while he doesn't neglect the rich strain of nuttiness on the right in 1964—not just the Birchers, but also people like the Goldwater delegates at the San Francisco convention who referred to Rockefeller as an "international socialist"—he resists the temptation to caricature.

And he captures a good deal of the insider's experience of a campaign, the increasingly breathless pace; the inner animosities, personal and factional, heightened by the sense of great political stakes; exhaustion linked to exalted highs and desperate lows; and the tendency to feel a potential tornado in any shift in the political wind. Perlstein recalls the things that gave the Goldwaterites hope—the Bobby Baker and Walter Jenkins scandals, the racial "backlash" accentuated by summer riots, the sense of moral unease—but he never forgets that, from the beginning, Goldwater was destined to rally the troops and go down to overwhelming defeat.

The conservative movement, after all, survived that electoral catastrophe. Perlstein argues—as Buckley did, amid the closing tumult of the 1964 campaign—that it was less important that Goldwater was fated to lose than that conservatism had proved capable of articulating an alternative on the right, reshaping American political dialogue for the decades that followed.

That perceived result helps explain why Perlstein, a journalist on the left, should be interested in the doings of right-wingers that took place five years before he was born. His subtext is

the hope that the left can learn from the right's successful failure—that the left can learn "how to act" in a way calculated to challenge the consensus of our times, the ideology of the market and the retreat from the regulatory state. If the Goldwaterites averted the "end of ideology," Perlstein looks for a left that can avoid the "end of history."

There are, however, at least two problems with this line of argument. In the first place, it risks giving the right too much credit: At least as much of the "unmaking of the American consensus" was due to the left. The civil rights movement—especially given LBJ's warm embrace—by making race a central theme of national politics, shattered old coalitions and understandings, giving the right a crucial opportunity. Racial resentment was the apple in the garden for Republican conservatives: Both Goldwater and Nixon, with moderate records on civil rights, could not resist the temptation to maneuver for George Wallace's support. For that matter, while LBJ talked consensus and conciliation, his Great Society involved a radical extension of the federal government's role, more a response to Michael Harrington's *The Other America* than a reflection of late '50s liberalism.

And of course, Vietnam—not much more than a shadow to the election of 1964—proved to inflict a nearly mortal wound on the Democratic coalition. In fact, although Ronald Reagan's ascent within the GOP began with the Goldwater campaign, his victory in 1980 is inconceivable without the McGovernite capture of the Democratic Party in 1972, the left's counterpart to the Goldwater nomination in 1964. The McGovern nomination, among other things, moved social "wedge" issues into the forefront of the Democratic agenda, playing a decisive role in creating the "Reagan Democrats" who still haunt American politics. The postwar politics of consensus, such as it was, was pulled apart from both sides of the ideological spectrum, and militancy on the left contrived to make conservatives seem less extreme.

Similarly, today's mistrust of government—partly the legacy of events like Vietnam, Watergate and our disappointments with the Great Society, partly a reflection of the libertarian drift of our culture—is almost as strong on the

**Goldwater's "successful failure"
was the first great triumph
of the new American
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nation's political
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decades that
followed. Could
progressives do
well by the same
strategy today?**



NEW YORK DAILY NEWS PHOTO left as it is on the right. And for any revival on the left, a vision of democratic authority is at least as important as—and not really separable from—instruction in the arts of politics.

In any case, politics in 1964 offers only very limited lessons for contemporary practice. As Perlstein indicates, there was already something anachronistic about the Goldwater movement: Focused on assembling a disciplined majority of convention delegates, Clif White—Goldwater's best strategist—seemed virtually unaware of "what a blitzkrieg looked like broadcast live on TV."

The Goldwater zealots looked and sounded altogether too much like a lynch mob, so that "'pyrrhic' was hardly an adequate word" to describe their victory. It wouldn't happen today: Conventions now are scripted and staged, if anything too boring to be worth TV's time. But then, Barry Goldwater wouldn't be nominated today.

In primaries, Goldwater was anything but impressive: He even lost New Hampshire to a write-in candidate, Henry Cabot Lodge, who—serving as ambassador to South Vietnam—never campaigned at all. White's master plan aimed at winning delegates largely chosen in conventions and caucuses, where disciplined organization can be decisive. In 1964, that was enough, although even then, Goldwater might not have been the

nominee without his narrow victory over Rockefeller in the California primary.

Nowadays, that would be out of the question. The changes initiated by the Democrats in 1968 and 1972 have created a nominating process overwhelmingly dominated by primaries and hence by mass electorates, media and money. It is harder and harder to challenge elites: Both of the last two Republican nominations, some early turbulence aside, were essentially coronations.

In one sense, Perlstein is obviously right to suggest that the years have made fools of the pundits and political scientists who argued, post-Goldwater, that another conservative nominee would be ruinous for the Republicans. But conservatism—in style and substance—has had to stoop to conquer. Barry Goldwater drew battlelines: He proposed selling the TVA and making Social Security voluntary; he expressed opposition to the progressive income tax; and—as if to emphasize Johnson's relative moderation—he talked about "defoliating" Vietnam with low yield nuclear weapons.

Subsequent conservatives—with Reagan the amiable master spirit—have conciliated where Goldwater confronted, blurring the edges of ideology with fuzzy math (as Perlstein notes, Reagan, unlike Goldwater, made excellent, if misleading, use of

statistics) and fuzzier reasoning, promising a "safety net" or "compassionate conservatism." Nor is this simply a matter of rhetoric. Today's conservatives do not criticize the Civil Rights Act or Medicare; they accept, at least in public, a good deal of the Great Society.

Prevailing opinion, after all, admires bipartisan good feeling. Americans are just as disposed toward tolerance as Alan Wolfe has suggested, not inclined to harm others but not greatly moved to help them either, feeling more or less comfortable but vulnerable, with few hopes beyond being left alone. It is, however, an uneasy consensus, lacking the moral basis afforded, back in the '50s, by the Cold War.

Not that it will be easy to realize the possibility of a new progressive politics: The political world is more demoralized and oligarchic than the one faced by Americans, left and right, at the time of Perlstein's story. Perlstein reminds us that, for all its difficulty, organization can still link voice to power and that committed citizenship—even of a crack-brained sort—can still aspire to a measure of self-rule. ■

Wilson Carey McWilliams teaches political science at Rutgers University. He is the author of Beyond the Politics of Disappointment? American Elections, 1980-1998.

Foundering Fathers

By Philip Connors

In the preface to the recently published *Trading Twelves: The Selected Letters of Ralph Ellison and Albert*

Jefferson's Pillow: The Founding Fathers and the Dilemma of Black Patriotism

By Roger Wilkins

Beacon

163 pages, \$23

Murray, Murray writes, in the cadence of a patriotic preacher:

Ellison and I regarded ourselves as being the heirs and continuators of the most indigenous mythic prefiguration of the most fundamental existential assumption underlying the human proposition as stated in the Declaration of Independence, which led to the social contract known as the Constitution and as specified by the Emancipation Proclamation and encapsulated in the Gettysburg Address and further particularized in the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.

Murray and Ellison, in other words, found their American Dream not in men but in the expression of their ideals, which outlived and transcended the founders themselves. Nevertheless, this position entailed both defiance of, and some form of reconciliation with, the horrific violence at the heart of the American project. Here we can see the culmination of W.E.B. Du Bois' theory of doubleness in men who took the project of integrating their dual selves—Negro and American, as Du Bois had it—to be the most profound work of a lifetime.

In *Jefferson's Pillow: The Founding Fathers and the Dilemma of Black Patriotism*, Roger Wilkins follows their lead and delves straight into the double-hearted

nature of the American Dream. A lucid work of history and personal reflection, it begins with two questions: "How is one to understand a country whose dreams the slave owners despoiled even as they were creating it? How is a black person to regard a land where his ancestors were meant to serve but not to grow?"

Wilkins has spent his lifetime in the public realm. He served as assistant attorney general during LBJ's presidency, won a Pulitzer Prize at the



Roger Wilkins (left) with Attorney General Ramsey Clark on the day after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

Washington Post for his coverage of Watergate, and has worked across several decades for the cause of civil rights. He feels himself to be an American deep in the marrow of his bones, and he wants to claim what he can of the legacy of the founders while recognizing that, had he been their contemporary, the only claim would have occurred in the other direction, as master over slave.

Wilkins' inquiry focuses specifically on the aspirations and accomplishments of four men: James Madison, George Mason, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. They owned, among them, more than 400 human beings sold or born into slavery. Yet their intellectual,

political and (in the case of Washington) military labors created democratic instruments later used to extend the basic rights of citizenship to all Americans.

The schoolhouse narrative of American history posits slave ownership as a blemish on the otherwise illustrious careers of the founders: We are perhaps to admire their legitimate achievements even more for having occurred coincidentally with their moral failures on the question of race. In this view, slavery was a kind of curse imposed on otherwise noble men by previous generations, a failing not so much of individual consciences as it was of the culture at large.

Wilkins acknowledges culture's role in shaping these men, but he also offers an alternative narrative whereby slave ownership proved *essential* to the founders' radical political project. Privileged members of the Virginia landed gentry, all four of the men he studies derived wealth and independence from their status as slave owners. Released from the rigors of physical labor themselves, they were free to travel, read, write, philosophize, stand as representatives in various embryonic bodies of democratic governance, and worry over the fate of their properties and their political freedoms. Slave labor, in other words, quite literally

enabled the founders the time and energy to pursue the project of constitutional democracy. In this reckoning, the slaves at Monticello and Mount Vernon were, in their own fashion, indispensable partners in the political birth of the nation—without them, Wilkins argues, the founders would have been "less learned, less strategically astute, and less politically wise."

Wilkins pokes around various paradoxes, juxtaposing the words and actions of the founders in ways that reveal them in all their maddening contradictions. Mason, in particular, seemed to understand the evil of what

he called "the infernal trade." He wrote with the moral clarity of a man seeking betterment through self-castigation: "Every master of slaves is born a petty tyrant. They bring the judgment of heaven on a country. As nations can

**In fact, the founders
worry a great deal
over slavery—but
only in the context of
nation-building.**

not be rewarded or punished in the next world they must in this." In a stroke of eerie prescience, he concluded, "By an inevitable chain of causes and effects, providence punishes national sins, by national calamities."

In fact, the founders worried a great deal over slavery—but they tended to do so only in the context of nation-building. Their lives were too entwined with the institution to allow them personally to renounce it. Yet their intimacy with its horrors fed their fears that they, too, might be ensnared in some form of bondage by their colonial masters across the ocean. Plagued by a nagging inferiority complex in relation to their aristocratic British counterparts, they clung to slavery as an emblem of their power and privilege even as they rued the consequences for democracy. Washington eventually freed his slaves—but only upon his death.

None of Wilkins' subjects embodied the contradictions between deeds and professed ideals more thoroughly than Jefferson. "He was a dizzying mixture of searing brilliance and infuriating self-indulgence, of idealism and base racism, of soaring patriotism and myopic self-involvement," Wilkins writes. "He was America writ small."

Recent DNA evidence, of course, indicates that Jefferson fathered four children with one of his slaves, Sally Hemings, even as he railed in his writings against the evils of miscegenation. The hypocrisy boggles the mind. Whatever affection may have existed between them, if there was any at all, the relationship occurred in the context of a man and his property.

Hemings was denied all of the freedoms for which Jefferson argued so passionately in the public realm.

Wilkins, by complicating our idea of these secular saints, implicitly makes a powerful argument in favor of the progressive impulse. Near the end, he writes:

When I think of my relative wealth as compared to poor people in my own country and in the developing world, and how little help I offer, I wonder how I would survive history's most intense scrutiny. I wonder the same things as I hum along alone in my powerful European sedan, commuting between work and home on a route just parallel to a public transportation system. ... Consuming comfortably while millions of malnourished and

therefore doomed children across the globe suffer in poverty, or helping to make the planet uninhabitable—how do these things stack up against slavery? I can't be sure, but I do know that though these are among the greatest moral challenges of my time, I am addicted, like the founding fathers, to my privileges and their convenience.

We are obliged to judge because we are obliged to do better; to probe the flaws of our predecessors is to engage not in vindictive finger-pointing but to resist hubris and complacency in our own time. Wilkins' book has made a mirror of the past in which we glimpse our own shortcomings—and perhaps even the means for transcending them. ■

Philip Connors is an editor on the Wall Street Journal's Leisure & Arts page.

California Seething

By Joshua Rothkopf

As audiences, we allow our actors to play serial killers, Mafia dons, lawyers. We'll even let them play the president for a term or two. But should we let them play more

The Anniversary Party
Written and directed by Alan
Cumming and Jennifer Jason Leigh

actors? Or, while they're at it, actually direct themselves and their cute actor friends (also playing actors) in scenarios of their own devising? Certain professional guilds might draw the line at *The Anniversary Party*, which has the casual feel of a Hollywood Hills-colony artwork made in spare time; it was co-written by its stars, Jennifer Jason Leigh and Alan Cumming, with their favorite colleagues in mind for the ensemble cast. But grumps would be missing out on the fun; it's an experiment that goes right more often than not.

For starters, the story, about a gathering of hypersensitive movie folk who come rawly undone over the course of one wild night, is supercharged—adrenalized like live performance and executed with a leanness that can only be an actor's

revenge for having to wait in trailers for hours. (Reportedly, the digital video shoot wrapped in 19 days. Take that, Dogme 95.) But it also veers, for the most part, away from the standard vanities of fame and sex, making for a more nuanced study of aging, children and money worries. When the emotional meltdowns arrive (and there's definitely one too many), we're still left with real people hurting, not just actors.

It's hard to imagine a more volatile duo intended to anchor a film than Leigh and Cumming, both scene stealers in their greatest moments of instability. (Leigh especially has carved a fearsome career out of junkies, prostitutes and the tragically simple-minded; Cumming threatened to unhinge the regal poise of *Eyes Wide Shut* with just a few minutes of screen time as a panting desk clerk.) Here, they've cast themselves as a bruised-but-hopeful married couple attempting a rebound from a year-long separation: "We're OK, aren't we?" "We're great."

Leigh is Sally Nash, a 30-something movie actress whose respected past has become a little too past. Cumming

plays Joe Therrian, one of those bad-boy British novelists whose bestseller is being preened for a blockbuster, which he has been tapped to direct. Though his novel is explicitly based on their happier years, Joe is thrilled by the suggestive interest of Skye Davidson (Gwyneth Paltrow), a nubile, slightly spacy megastar whom he'd like to cast in the female lead, a role Sally expects for herself but is crushingly denied.

But no time for the pain: Guests are already knocking at the glass panels of the couple's airy Richard Neutra house for the kind of semi-public display of resiliency (with hors d'oeuvres) that only the extroverted could find cathartic. (One of the many things the film gets right is the way personal snubs are masked by a cold hyper-professionalism: "Delete that," is the repeated refrain after many a faux-pas.) Skye wafts in, as does their blowhard business manager (John Benjamin Hickey) and his insensitive wife (Parker Posey, perfect in this kind of thing), both concerned about their clients' grim finances. Then there's Sally's current director, Mac (John C. Reilly), who brings along some video dailies and quietly sneaks away to fret over Sally's awful performance, and his actress wife, Clair (the sublimely neurotic Jane Adams from *Happiness*, all bony elbows and pinched grins), a new mother desperately popping pills to keep in roles. (At one point, she's called a "wraith," though it's meant as a compliment.)

A thick-rimmed Peter Sellers look-alike (Michael Panes) shows up, as does a leather-clad photographer (Jennifer Beals), and it's here, when some retro-hip organ music is cranked and drinks are served over tart asides, that you might be pleasantly reminded of *Lolita* or some of Fellini's catty party scenes set to swinging "Patricia." For first-time directors, Leigh and Cumming have packed their setup with impressive combustibility; when the fireworks start to pop, they never let up: an aggressively mean game of charades, a wildly inappropriate toast by an aging leading man (Kevin Kline, spot-on in hambone mode), the unwrapping of Skye's heartfelt present to the couple—several tablets of ecstasy.

These people don't need drugs (neither does the film), and I would have been satisfied by two finishing turns in



PETER SOREL/FINE LINE FEATURES

An ecstatic evening with Gwyneth and Jennifer.

particular: Phoebe Cates' increasingly manic warnings to Sally about having children with the fickle Joe; and Mina Badie's coiled neighbor who desperately wants her litigious husband to go home so she can cut loose.

But epiphanies are doled out in *Magnolia*-size helpings, turning the endgame into more of a generous showcase for chops than something whole.

(Worse, some are unmotivated intrusions—including that old hairy gag of the late-night phone call bearing bad news—a shame when other strands could have been further exploited.) Nonetheless, any film that ends on as modest a note as the dutiful signing of tax returns has more of a grounding in reality than these few missteps might suggest. These actors did all right. ■

Musical Memento

By Evan Endicott

It has been four years since the incident—four years since *OK Computer*, riding a tidal wave of critical acclaim, inspired every media outlet with a penchant for hyperbole to dub

Amnesiac
Radiohead
EMI/Capitol

Radiohead "The Best Band in the World." But then the British group disappeared into the studio for nearly three years before resurfacing with 2000's *Kid A*. It came out of the clouds, without a radio single or Buzz Clip to herald its arrival, topped the charts briefly and fluttered away again. And while the

echoes of its impact still resonate, fans and critics alike have been left to wonder: What happened to those five young gentlemen from Oxford?

Amnesiac, Radiohead's second album in less than a year, leaves little in the way of clues. Allegedly cobbled together from spare parts left lying around the studio after *Kid A*, the album is a disorienting, schizophrenic listening experience that lives up to its title. *Kid A*'s genius lies in its seamless flow, in the way one track melts into another like two amoeba making senseless love. *Amnesiac* shows no such attention to sequence: Its songs switch mood and style constantly, and one feels lost trying to navigate its sonic terrain. If the

album's title implies a separation from the past, abandoning the album-length arcs of *Kid A* and *OK Computer* may be Radiohead's first step toward reclaiming their future.

But it's a step backward as well—there will be singles and videos on MTV and a globe-spanning tour of sold-out performances. The question is no longer whether Radiohead are the best band in the world, but rather, who are Radiohead and what do they want?

Awake. Where are we? Bourbon Street. Drunk at dawn, wandering through a dimly-lit alley when the sound of "Life in a Glass House" hits. A stumbling piano line, horns that wander

**Glass houses, crushed
tin boxes, trap doors
that you can't come
back from," spinning
plates, revolving
doors, going "round
and round and round."
What's happening?**

inebriated circles around Thom Yorke's fragile tenor—"Once again, packed like frozen food and battery hens, think of all the starving millions." A skewering stab at rock stardom? Are we the hens packed into cramped concert halls, trading ticket stubs for a chance at vicarious revelation?

Or maybe we're the critics "hungry for a lynching." *Amnesiac* is full of images of confinement: glass houses, crushed tin boxes, trap doors "that you can't come back from." *Amnesiac* is also replete with images of revolution: spinning plates, revolving doors, going "round and round and round."

"Be constructive," Yorke demands (of himself?) on "Dollars and Cents," his sentiment echoing into the dark spaces constructed by the tune's sparse instrumentation. As feedback rumbles slowly into the mix and the track gains momentum, Yorke's voice sails into its upper register: "Why don't you quiet down? Why don't you quiet down?" This is not a request; it's a mantra.

These are not lyrics; these are tattoos carved into a body of work to remind the artist who he is, to help him get a foothold on a mountain that threatens to unleash a landslide at any moment.

What's happening here? Many fans insisted that *Amnesiac* would mark Radiohead's return to their early guitar ballads; *Kid A* was just a diversion, an experiment. They were wrong. As if to prove this point, "Knives Out" begins with a series of familiar chorused arpeggios, only to introduce the lines, "I want you to know, he's not coming back, look into my eyes, I'm not coming back." Is this Yorke's eulogy for mid-'90s Radiohead, with its oh-so-pretty guitars and yearning melodies? Or for his mid-'90s self, the bleached-blond rocker with uneven eyes who rode around a day-glo grocery store singing about his "fake plastic girl"?

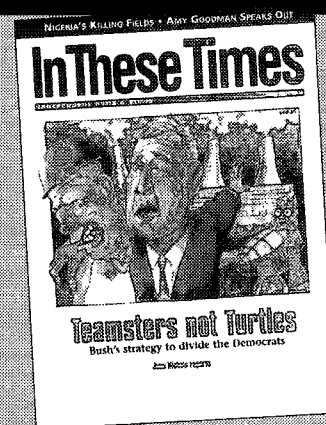
He seems unsure. "I Might Be Wrong" is an admission of doubt set to the catchiest groove on the album. A simple blues figure, sequenced to repeat like a synth riff, starts over a static drone. Drums kick in, and we're compelled to jerk and sway like ecstasy-fueled robots. "I might be wrong, I might be wrong," Yorke recites, and we hope he is; this has the swagger of young Mick Jagger and the textured depth of *Kid A*'s finest moments.

But if *Amnesiac* is about forgetting, no dream can survive beyond dawn. To the ping-pong beat of a clanging electronic drum and mesmerizing synth loop, Yorke declares matter-of-factly on "Packt like Sardines into a Crushed Tin Box" that "after years of waiting, nothing came ... you realize you're looking, looking in the wrong place." Yorke's being utterly human, vulnerable and angry all at once: "I'm a reasonable man, get off my case, get off my case, get off my case."

Pessimists have dismissed *Amnesiac* as "Kid B," but that does a disservice to *Kid A*'s power. *Amnesiac* isn't nearly as boldly drawn or well-defined, but neither is it a haphazard collection of B-sides and outtakes. If Yorke's lyrics betray a wandering disconnection with his world, the musical eclecticism on display is equally untethered. But what of the obsession with confinement and repetition? Are Radiohead really trapped, with their legions of loyal followers and carte blanche to indulge their muse?

I have no idea. Or maybe I just forgot. ■

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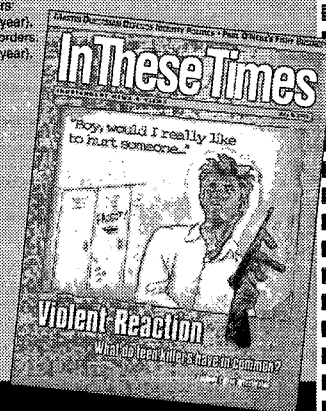
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SYLVIA

GENDER CHATS



By Nicole Hollander

Something Beautiful

Continued from page 30

party, a rave takes place next door to a meeting about unionizing fast-food workers.

In Italy, this culture developed out of necessity. With politicians on both the left and right mired in corruption scandals, large numbers of Italian youths understandably have concluded that it is power itself that corrupts. The social center network is a parallel political sphere that, rather than trying to gain state power, provides alternative state services—such as day care and advocacy for refugees—at the same time as it confronts the state through direct action. For instance, on the night I spent at Rome's Corto Ciccuio, the communal dinner of lasagna and caprese salad received a particularly enthusiastic reception because it was prepared by a chef who had just been released from jail after his arrest at an anti-fascist rally. And two days before, at Milan's Leoncavallo center, I stumbled across several members of Le Tute Bianche (the white overalls) who were pouring over digital maps of Genoa, in preparation for the G8.

The direct action group, named after the uniform its members wear to protests, has just issued a "declaration of war" on the meeting in Genoa. It has pledged to cross police lines and held a public demonstration of the defensive armaments it plans to use (including suits padded with foam and rubber tires).

But war declarations aren't the most shocking things going on at the social centers these days. Far more surprising is the

fact that, in the past few years, these anti-authoritarian militants, defined by their rejection of party politics, have begun running for office—and winning. In Venice, Rome and Milan, prominent social center activists, including leaders of Tute Bianche, are now City Council members.

Some say the trend is simply a defensive measure: with Silvio Berlusconi's right-wing Forza Italia in power, they need to protect themselves from those who would shut down the centers. But others, including Beppe Caccia, a member of the Tute Bianche and the Venice City Council, say that the move into municipal politics is a natural evolution.

The nation-state is in crisis, he argues, both weakened in the face of global powers and corrupt in the face of corporate ones. Meanwhile, in Italy, strong regional sentiments for greater decentralization have been seized by the right, often with fascist undertones. In this climate, Caccia proposes a two-pronged strategy of confronting unaccountable, unrepresentative powers at the global level (for example, at the G8), while simultaneously rebuilding a new, more accountable and participatory politic locally (where the social center meets the City Council). Which brings me back to the question posed in the suburbs of Rome's mummified empire. Though it may be hard to tell at first, the social centers aren't ghettos, they are windows—not only into another way to live, disengaged from the state, but also into a new politics of engagement.

And yes, it's something maybe beautiful. ■

Good Friday

Continued from page 21

It's hard to determine whether Sinn Fein's electoral mandate will allow them to move the IRA forward on arms decommissioning or make them more intransigent. It is clear that Sinn Fein's political strategy has been successful beyond even their expectations. The hope is that electoral success will knit them more firmly into the democratic process.

But there is historic precedent for a British general election tragically impacting the search for peace in Northern Ireland. In 1973 and 1974, a previous attempt to establish a power-sharing government was made. The so-called Sunningdale agreement established an assembly and executive cabinet with both unionists and nationalists participating. Sunningdale also created a Council of Ireland that gave the Dublin government a consultative role in Northern Irish affairs, not unlike the North/South Ministerial Council that is part of the current arrangement.

In February 1974, Prime Minister Edward Heath called a general election. With 30,000 security forces patrolling the streets of Northern Ireland, unionists who campaigned against Sunningdale won eleven of twelve seats. Brian Faulkner, leader of the largest unionist party at the time, was forced to resign as party leader because of his support of Sunningdale. And in May of that year, the Protestant Ulster Workers Council called a general strike that as one historian observed, "almost broke up the fabric of civilized life in Ulster." The British government refused to use troops to break up the strike, and Northern Ireland's experiment in constitutional government ended

abruptly. Twenty years of gruesome sectarian warfare followed.

These days, the Good Friday agreement's finely crafted political institutions also seem on the verge of tumbling down. On a purely visceral level, both DUP voters and Sinn Fein supporters have reason to celebrate. Time will tell whether their gains will have a salutary effect on the peace process. But there are many who argue that in the long term, the "hollowing out" of the political center is not a good sign.

Of course, one critical difference between the DUP and Sinn Fein is that Sinn Fein is supportive of the peace process and the DUP is not. If Trimble, who may have been given his walking papers in the aftermath of the election, is replaced as head of the UUP, his successor undoubtedly will insist on renegotiating the Good Friday agreement. That will not happen, but what would follow is unpredictable. The assembly could be suspended, or new elections could be called within a few months.

Already, in late June some of the most serious rioting in recent years has taken place in North Belfast as nationalists and loyalists clashed. In an ominous sign, shots were fired from both sides—an indication of what might be to come if the political institutions cannot be saved.

In another context, William Butler Yeats warned of the dire social consequences of a "center" that would not hold. There is still an overwhelming desire for peace in Northern Ireland. The assembly has brought power to local communities and away from London, a very popular development. Whether the popular will can overcome the centrifugal forces let loose remains to be determined.

Kelly Candaele has written extensively on Northern Ireland for the Los Angeles Times and other national publications.

Something Maybe Beautiful

By Naomi Klein



A woman with long brown hair and a cigarette-scratched voice has a question. "What does this place look like to you," she asks, with the help of an interpreter, "an ugly ghetto, or something maybe beautiful?"

It was a trick question. We were sitting in a ramshackle squat in one of the least picturesque suburbs of Rome. The walls of the stumpy building were covered in graffiti, the ground was muddy, and all around us were bulky, menacing housing projects. If any of the 20 million tourists who flocked to Rome last year had taken a wrong turn and ended up here, they immediately would have dived for their *Fodor's* and fled for somewhere with vaulted ceilings, fountains and frescoes.

But while the remains of one of the most powerful and centralized empires in history are impeccably preserved in downtown Rome, it is here, in the city's poor outskirts, where I caught a

glimpse of a new, living politics. And it is as far away from Roman emperors and Caesar's armies as you can possibly get.

The squat in question is called Corto Ciccutto, one of Italy's many "*centri sociali*." Social centers are abandoned buildings—warehouses, factories, military forts, schools—that have been occupied by squatters and transformed into cultural and political hubs, explicitly free from both the market and state control. By some estimates there are 150 social centers in Italy.

The largest and oldest—Leoncavallo in Milan—has been shut down by the police and reopened many times. Today, it is practically a self-contained city, with several restaurants, gardens, a bookstore, a cinema, an indoor skateboard ramp, and a club so large it was able to host Public Enemy when they came to town. These are scarce bohemian spaces in a rapidly gentrifying world, a fact that prompted the French newspaper *Le Monde* to describe the intricate network of squats as "the Italian cultural jewel."

But the social centers are more than the best place to be on a Saturday night, they are also ground zero of a growing political militancy in Italy—one that is poised to explode onto the world stage when the G8 meets in Genoa in July. In the centers, culture and politics mix easily together: A debate about direct action turns into a huge outdoor

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